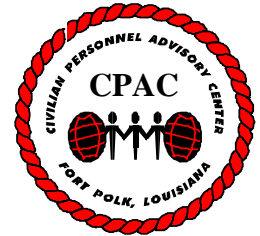




CIVILIAN PERSONNEL ADVISORY CENTER FORT POLK, LOUISIANA 71459-5341



"A Return to Prominence -- The Year to Excel."

CPAC INFORMATION BULLETIN
NUMBER 69

APRIL 2005

In the glow of the dawn,
Welcome a new day,
Greet the golden sunlight or rain,
Nature in all its subtlety.
Whip of the wind,
Earth unfolds,
Softly falling rain,
Growing plants and buds
blossoming.
Visions of the earth, with glories of
nature,
Beauty of the daffodils,
Sunshine and rain from a rainbow,
Awe! Nature in full bloom

- Blanche Black, *Springtime*



NATIONAL SECURITY PERSONNEL SYSTEM (NSPS) UPDATE

A total of 56,486 comments were submitted on the NSPS proposed regulations during the public comment period which ended on March 16, 2005. These comments are now being analyzed to determine their impact on the NSPS design.

The next phase of the process is a minimum 30-day "meet and confer" period with national union representatives. This collaborative effort, coupled with the comments received, will form the basis to define the details of the new system. To view the proposed regulations and/or the comments submitted, click on the following link:
<http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/index.html>.

NSPS Myths and Facts

General

MYTH

NSPS does nothing to help with national security.

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FACT

Not true. The mission of DoD is national security, and civilians play a vital role in supporting that mission. NSPS provides the Department the tools necessary to recruit, retain, and manage the civilian workforce to accomplish our critical mission in a more effective and efficient manner. NSPS will also provide flexibilities so we can reduce our reliance on the military to perform jobs that civilians can and should perform, freeing up the military to perform its war fighting duties. NSPS is a mission-driven, performance-based system that motivates, recognizes, and rewards excellence, which will result in an overall improvement to mission effectiveness, and enhanced national security. This is critical in the global war on terrorism.

MYTH

Under NSPS, DoD civilians can be assigned anywhere in the world, even to a war zone, with little or no notice.

FACT

Currently DoD has the authority to reassign employees, including reassignment to overseas locations, when necessary to support the mission. We do this under today's system. This authority is unaffected by NSPS. One of the goals of NSPS is to reduce its reliance on military to perform jobs that could be performed by civilians.

Benefits**MYTH**

I will lose my benefits under NSPS.

FACT

NSPS will not affect rules governing retirement benefits or eligibility, health and life insurance, leave, attendance, and other similar benefits.

MYTH

NSPS eliminates veterans' preference for reduction in force (RIF) and hiring.

FACT

NSPS preserves veterans' preference. DoD is committed to the principles of veterans' preference; under NSPS, veterans continue to receive preference for both hiring and RIF.

MYTH

Seniority and veterans' preference will no longer count in the event of a reduction in force (RIF).

FACT

Not true. Veterans' preference eligibles are still retained over employees without veterans' preference in RIF. Also, seniority continues to be a factor in RIF. However, because NSPS is a performance-based system, the proposed regulations give greater weight to performance in RIF retention by placing performance ahead of length of service. Employees competing for retention under RIF who have the same performance ratings will be retained based on length of service.

MYTH

I will lose my job security and there will be layoffs.

FACT

No jobs will be eliminated because of NSPS. In fact, under NSPS there may be more opportunities for civilians as military positions are converted to civilian. By easing the administrative burden routinely required by the current system, managers will turn to civilians first when assigning vital tasks.

Pay

MYTH

I will lose pay under NSPS and I won't get credit for the time I've already spent waiting for my next within grade increase.

FACT

Employees will not lose pay upon conversion to NSPS. Employees will be converted into NSPS at their current salary. In many cases, employees will receive a salary increase equal to the amount they have earned towards their next within grade increase (this is known as the "WGI buy-in").

MYTH

There will be no locality pay under NSPS.

FACT

The proposed NSPS pay system includes a locality-based component of pay called a "local market supplement" that is paid in addition to an employee's basic pay. The local market supplement will be based on market conditions related to geographical and occupational factors, and may differ from one occupation to another in a given locality area. Employees will be entitled to increases to the local market supplement, unless they are performing at an unacceptable level.

MYTH

NSPS is just a way to freeze the pay of DoD civilians, since we're no longer entitled to the automatic January pay increase or within-grade increases.

FACT

The annual January pay increase, as we know it now, will change. The proposed pay rules provide for periodic "rate range" adjustments, to adjust the minimum and/or maximum rate of a pay band. When a minimum rate of a pay band is

adjusted upward, employees will receive an equivalent increase. There are no "steps," similar to the GS system, in a pay banding system. Instead, pay increases and/or performance bonuses are based primarily on your performance rating. Unacceptable performers are not eligible for pay increases under the proposed system.

MYTH

Under NSPS, funds for salaries and bonuses will no longer be certain.

FACT

DoD is committed to ensuring civilian compensation is protected. In fact, the law requires that the aggregate amount of money allocated for civilian compensation for organizations under NSPS cannot be less than the amount that would have been allocated under the existing system. Under NSPS, the overall amount of money that would have been used for the annual January pay adjustment, within grade increases, quality step increases, and similar payments, will be used for civilian pay, and those funds will be protected. However, the proposed NSPS pay system will distribute those funds based primarily on performance.

MYTH

My supervisor will not be prepared and equipped to fairly and objectively rate my performance, and will not be held accountable for exercising his responsibility under NSPS.

FACT

Supervisors and managers will have an important role in determining performance-based pay increases. The flexibilities proposed in the NSPS regulations bring with them an increased need for accountability. This includes employee accountability for performance, as well as supervisory and managerial

accountability for the proper exercise of the authorities of NSPS. Extensive training will be given to supervisors and managers, both military and civilian. Training will focus on improving skills needed for effective performance management: setting clear expectations; communicating with employees; and linking individual expectations to the goals and objectives of the organization. Supervisors and managers will be held accountable for how effectively they use the tools provided by NSPS. They will also be subject to the pay and performance provisions of the system, and their pay will be affected by how well they perform their duties as supervisors and managers.

Labor-Management Relations

MYTH

Unions have had no involvement in developing NSPS.

FACT

The proposed NSPS regulations are the product of a broad-based, collaborative effort across the Department that began in 2004. This included a number of meetings with employee representatives involving extensive and fruitful discussions on potential options for the design of the system. In several areas, the proposed regulations reflect the interests and concerns that were voiced during those consultation sessions. We also held numerous focus groups and town hall meetings, many of which included local union involvement, to gather input and feedback on the system design. Now that we have published our proposed regulations, the next step in this process is to gather comments and recommendations on the proposed regulations, and engage in more discussions and dialogue with employee representatives as called for in the law authorizing NSPS.

MYTH

NSPS will do away with bargaining units and employee unions.

FACT

Not true. The implementation of the NSPS labor relations system *will not* eliminate unions or bargaining units. Employees will still be able to be represented by labor organizations and to bargain collectively. The proposed rules enable the Department to act expeditiously in carrying out its mission by limiting the situations that are subject to bargaining, and speeding up the bargaining process.

Employee Rights

MYTH

Employees will lose their fundamental rights to grieve or appeal unfair decisions or adverse actions.

FACT

NSPS does not change critical employee rights such as merit systems principles, due process, whistleblower protections, and protection against prohibited discrimination and personnel practices. There will continue to be avenues for employees to seek redress. For bargaining unit employees, negotiated grievance procedures will remain part of the process, and other employees will continue to have access to administrative grievance procedures, as well as formal appeals processes for adverse actions.

MYTH

Under NSPS, there is no process for employees to challenge their performance rating.

FACT

DoD is developing a process that will allow employees to request reconsideration of their rating to a higher authority. This process will apply to all employees under NSPS. Under current law, employees in the same organization are often subject to different procedures and avenues when challenging performance ratings. This sometimes results in inconsistent decisions. Because of the importance of the performance rating process and its impact on pay, DoD will ensure that every

employee has the same opportunity to seek appropriate redress.

MYTH

Under NSPS, there is no due process for employees affected by an adverse action.

FACT

Not true. The proposed regulations preserve due process rights for employees who are subject to an adverse action (e.g., removal, suspension of more than 14 days, reduction in pay or pay band level). In all such cases, employees continue to have the right to notice of proposed action, the right to reply, the right to representation, and the right to appeal that action. The rule changes proposed in the regulations seek to streamline this process so that workplace issues are resolved quickly, while ensuring due process, recognizing the need for workplace accountability, and providing efficient tools for dealing with performance and conduct issues.

MYTH

The proposed appeal system is not an impartial process.

FACT

Under NSPS, employees retain the right to appeal to a third party in adverse action cases. The proposed regulations retain Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) administrative judges as the initial adjudicators of employee appeals of adverse actions. Although the proposed regulations provide for a Departmental review of those initial administrative judge decisions, employees retain the right to appeal to the full MSPB to review a final Department decision.

**In every picture there's a poem;
In every poem, a picture**

-Chinese proverb

EMERGENCY CONTACT DATA

Last month due to the death of an employee, we went to the Emergency Contact Data Base to determine his next of kin for notification purposes. To our surprise, the employee's contact information was not listed. Not only that, in querying the system we found that less than 5 percent of our employees are registered.

This serves to confirm that the Army has developed an automated emergency contact data base system as a result of the lessons learned from the September 11th terrorist attacks. All Appropriated and Nonappropriated fund civilian employees are/should be reminded to enter their emergency contact information. The instructions can be found on the Army website, at <http://cpol.army.mil/library/emergency/contacts/>.

The emergency data you provide will be stored and made available to only those authorized individuals who will be directly involved in the actual process of notifying your emergency contact(s) and processing or assisting with the necessary documents in the event of injury or death of an employee.

The system is user friendly. First, a screen consisting of the necessary data elements is available for you to complete on the website. In order to gain access to the data base and enter your emergency contact information, you will first need to register as a "new user". Your social security number is being used since it is the one account that distinguishes you as an employee without duplication. Please note that when entering your social security number, it will not be displayed on the screen. As you enter your social security number, it will be represented on the screen by asterisks (*).

The next screen will provide you with instructions to establish your password. After you have established your password, you will

be able to proceed and enter your emergency contact data. Once you have successfully entered your emergency contact data, you can update and change the information as changes occur. You must enter your user id and password each time you wish to access your account to modify or update your existing data.

As a practical tip, if the primary emergency contact listed is not an immediate relative, it is important for you to inform your emergency contacts in advance about how to locate your next of kin and/or dependents.

Your cooperation is needed to enable us to promptly notify the emergency contact of your choosing. Failure to provide this information could result in a delay in the notification of your next of kin in the event of an emergency or death. Disclosure of your social security number is voluntary; however, failure to provide your social security number may delay the notification process. You'll be asked to review your emergency contact data on an annual basis and help keep the information current.

You should also consider updating designation of beneficiary forms if you believe the information is out of date.

Emergency Contact Data Instructions

The Army developed an automated emergency contact data base system as a result of the lessons learned from the September 11th terrorist attacks. All Appropriated and Non-Appropriated fund civilian employees are reminded to enter their emergency contact information. The instructions can also be found on the Army website, at <http://cpol.army.mil>. Registration and updates should be completed within 60 days.

The emergency data you provide will be stored and made available to only those authorized individuals who will be directly involved in the actual process of notifying your emergency contact(s) and processing or assisting with the necessary documents in the event of injury or death of an employee.

A screen consisting of the necessary data elements is available for you to complete on the Army website, <https://cpsapp2.belvoir.army.mil/emergency/default.asp> or via <http://cpol.army.mil> under "What's New". In order to gain access to the data base and enter your emergency contact information, you will first need to register as a "new user". Your social security number is being used since it is the one account that distinguishes you as an employee without duplication. Please note that when entering your social security number, it will not be displayed on the screen. As you enter your social security number, it will be represented on the screen by asterisks (*).

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You should also consider updating designation of beneficiary forms if you believe the information is out of date.

Take the utmost trouble to find the right thing to say, and then say it with the utmost levity.

George Bernard Shaw



HAVE YOU HEARD??

The ABC-C is going to provide services to separated employees!

Beginning 1 April 2005, employees that are serviced by the Department of the Army can reach a benefits counselor for a period of six months from their separation date for assistance with benefits related issues.

What does this mean to separating employees?

Separated employees will be able to contact a benefits counselor to answer questions about their benefits following separation. These questions may be related to the areas of health benefits, life insurance, status of retirement packets, Thrift Savings Plan, etc.



How can a separated employee contact the ABC-C?

Dial the toll-free number for the ABC-C as indicated above or in the yellow box and make the following selections:

- At the welcome message, press 1.
- To access the Benefits and Entitlements Services System, press 2.
- At the next voicing the following will be heard "Press 1 for Army serviced employees and employees separated within 180 days". Press 1.
- At that point, the voicing will indicate the requirement to use the SSN and PIN to access the system, press 1.
- After entering the SSN the following will be heard, "Please hold while we transfer you to a benefits counselor". At that point, the

call has been transferred to a counselor within the ABC-C for personal assistance.

Separated employees will not be able to use EBIS to review records or request assistance. If EBIS is entered, a message will be displayed that says "Access Denied" and instructs the customer to contact a benefits counselor for assistance and provides the main toll free telephone number.

What if the customer does not remember their ABC-C Personnel Identification Number (PIN)?

Good news for a separated employee! The PIN will not be required. Once the Social Security Number has been entered, the system will transfer the call to the next available counselor.

For assistance, contact the SWCPOC HelpDesk at 785-239-2000 or DSN 856-2000 between 7:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. CST on normal workdays.

RESUMIX

How to Apply

Website is www.cpol.army.mil

It will be important for you to read the vacancy announcement to see if you are within the target audience as described below.

- The target audience for the first type of announcement is generally current permanent Army employees. However, the announcement is often open to other current and former Federal employees and those who can be appointed under various appointment authorities such as some veterans, handicapped employees, reinstatement eligibles, Executive Order 12721 eligibles, etc.
- The target audience for the second type of announcement is those who have never been a permanent Federal employee or do not have one of the

appointment authorities described in paragraph 1. This type of announcement is commonly used for entry-level positions, hard-to-fill jobs (such as Medical and Engineering occupations), and when managers choose to expand the applicant pool to the general public. Most of these announcements are restricted to U.S. citizens.

How do I Prepare a Resume ?

Use Army's Resume Builder with the following in mind:

This tool allows you to create a resume with all of the required information and to electronically save it to Army's database. When you electronically submit your resume and/or self-nomination for a vacancy, you will receive an electronic acknowledgement of receipt. You may use the Army resume builder or use the hyper-links in vacancy announcements to build your resume. NAF uses different tools – go to NAF Opportunities for instructions on NAF jobs.

Your resume is not intended to be a complete "working life history" but should provide enough information to determine eligibility and qualifications. When preparing your resume, start by thinking about your career goals. Focus on defining and identifying the key and meaningful skills you currently possess. Describe your experience in sufficient detail with concrete words rather than vague descriptions. Do not use acronyms. A well-written resume can be used to compete for many DA vacancies.

While Army accepts resumes by e-mail or regular mail, you are strongly encouraged to use Army's Resume Builder. If you choose to submit an application by email or regular mail it must be in the format used by the Resume Builder. Other resume formats will not be considered. If you choose to prepare and submit a traditional resume, you will need to follow the instructions in the [Army Job Application kit](#).

Please be aware, your resume is subject to review and verification. Legal and regulatory penalties may be imposed if false information is provided.

How do I Submit a Resume ?

It is recommended that you submit a resume at the beginning of your job search. Once a resume is on file, you can easily apply for jobs from the job announcement. The Army Resume Builder, the NAF resume builder, or the job announcement will have guidance on where to submit your resume. You may update your resume at anytime, however, it is important to remember that only the latest resume will be active.

How do I Self-Nominate (Apply)?

You must complete two steps to apply under a vacancy announcement - submit a resume and self nominate. Self-nominate is not available for NAF jobs. Once you have saved and submitted your resume you are ready to apply for specific vacancy announcements. As you see vacancies for which you want to be considered, you must apply by self-nominating. All you need to do is click on the Search for Jobs button, select your job preferences and when you find the announcement that interests you, scroll to the bottom and click on the "Self-Nom" button. This button will take you to the Self-Nomination program where you may electronically apply for the vacancy. Although not recommended, you may also self nominate through email, surface mail or fax. Instructions for this process are in the announcement.

How do I monitor the status of my job search?

You have easy access to real-time information on the status of your application through ANSWER. Just click on the Build A Resume / View Resume Status button on the left hand side of the screen.

ANSWER is not available for NAF.

Use ANSWER to view the status of your resume and self-nomination(s). You can also view the resume that you currently have on file. By using the Army Resume Builder to electronically submit your resume and self-nominations, you will avoid waiting until applications are manually processed to find out your status.

Resumes from applicants not permanently employed by the Department of Army will be retained in the database for six (6) months from date of last submission of resume, date last accessed, or until selected for a position.

Resumes from current permanent Department of Army civilian employees will be retained in the database until the employee either updates the resume or is selected for a position through competitive referral.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

If you have any questions, please submit an inquiry to:

@ applicanthelp@cpsrxtpl.belvoir.army.mil

For NAF jobs, contact your local human resource office. For other information, follow the instructions in the vacancy announcement.

Remember, each vacancy announcement provides instructions on how to apply for the position and also includes a point of contact should you have questions regarding the announcement.

APRIL MANDATORY TRAINING



Mandatory Training for FY 05 will be conducted during the employee's birth month.

Employees and their supervisors have the opportunity to choose between two dates to attend the training. Everyone is required to attend this training.... Mark your calendar and plan to attend.

The April 2005 training dates are:

5 April 2005 in Education Center Rm 223
20 April 2005 at Bayou Theater

The schedule of training is as follows:

0800-0930 - Alcohol and Drug Abuse

0930-0940 - break
 0940-1010- Security
 1010-1020 - break
 1020-1120 - DA Ethics Training
 1140-1240 - Lunch
 1240-1540 - E/POSH

ANTI-TERRORISM TRAINING

The April 2005 Level 1 Anti-Terrorism onsite class date is scheduled for **19 April 2005, 0830-1200 hours at the Bayou Theater**. All birth-month employees are required to attend this training **OR** complete this training online prior to 19 April 05 as follows:

The online location of the training is <http://at-awareness.org> the access code is **aware**. Once you get in you will be asked to sign-up. Please complete the sign-up form and submit. After submission you will be able to log on immediately. Make sure that you remember your username and password.
 -Click on AT Level 1 Course
 -When ready to begin the training - scroll down to Begin the Training and click on cv
 -The rest is user friendly.

All individuals who choose to complete the training online must print a copy of the certificate of training and fax it to Tami Culbreath at 531-1851. Include the social security number on the certificate of completion.

The reward of a thing well done is to have done it.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 - 1882),
The Conduct of Life, 'Fate,' 1860

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Services

The Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP) Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a job-based program designed to help DA civilian employees, military and civilian employees' family members, and military retirees and their family members. The program is designed to assist in the identification and resolution of problems associated with employee's alcohol, drug, marital, legal, financial, stress and other personal concerns which may adversely affect their job performance. The EAP maintains confidentiality within the limits of company policies, statutes, regulations, or court orders.

The Employee Assistant Program Coordinator (EAPC) is responsible for providing the above services. The EAPC also provides civilian and supervisory training in relating to the EAP as well as Workplace Violence Intervention.

Your Ft Polk POC is
Ms. Urseline Stennis, EAPC
Office hours: 0730-1630 M-F
Location: BLDG 2048, 15th Street
Phone Number: 531-2031/6187

AKO Username Changes (*available now*)

Do you need to change your AKO username? Username changes are available to anyone who has just been married/divorced, has had a legal name change, or has a misspelled or inappropriate username. Please note that you must first contact your Personnel Office/S1 and have your information updated in the Total Army Personnel Database before AKO will change your username.

Click here for the AKO Username Policy, or view the Username Change FAQ for more information.

To request a username change, send an email to help@us.army.mil that includes:

- Your current AKO username
- Last 4 digits of your SSN
- Your preferred new username

RETIRED DAC.... DID YOU KNOW THAT....

Retired DAC is authorized to keep/have an AKO account. When an employee retires, they should call the AKO Helpdesk @ 1-877-256-8737 and notify them that they have retired. After verifying the retired DAC's information, the AKO Helpdesk will change the retiree's information in the AKO system to reflect their status as a retired DAC.

Setting Up Automatic OPM Vacancy Announcement Notifications

In response to inquiries from employees, we want to advise you of a way that you can set up an account with the Office of Personnel Management to automatically send you e-mail notifications of vacancy announcements. This will only take you about five minutes to set up. You may set up the account to show you only Army positions or all Federal Agencies; you customize the account for your personal needs.

Go to www.usajobs.opm.gov

SELECT MY USAJOBS (3RD choice across the top)

SELECT CREATE YOUR ACCOUNT NOW
Once you have saved this, you will receive an e-mail notification that your account has been established.

SELECT: Create a new search agent

Complete the questions required to set up your account. (For example, you can designate the location, series, grade, agency, etc. for which you wish to receive e-mail notifications of announcements).

Once this is completed you will receive e-mails on a daily, weekly, monthly basis depending on what you selected when you set up the account that there are currently announcements posted for the positions you are interested in. The e-mail includes a hot link to see the announcements.

HOLIDAY/LIBERAL LEAVE SCHEDULE FOR 2005

HOLIDAY	DATE DESIGNATED	TRAINING/ LIBERAL LEAVE
Memorial Day	30 May 2005	27 May 2005
Independence Day	4 July 2005	1 July 2005
Labor Day	5 September 2005	2 September 2005
Columbus Day	10 October 2005	7 October 2005
Veteran's Day	11 November 2005	14 November 2005
Thanksgiving Day	24 November 2005	25 November 2005
Christmas Day	26 December 2005	23 December 2005
New Year's Day	2 January 2006	30 December 2005

For additional information pertaining to the holiday and liberal leave schedule refer to CPB 01-05 dated 3 January 2005.



REMINDER: The Open Seasons for TSP will be eliminated effective 1 July 2005.

TSP RATES OF RETURN

Rates of Return were updated on **1 April 2005**.

	G Fund	F Fund	C Fund	S Fund	I Fund
Mar 2005	0.37%	(0.48%)	(1.71%)	(1.86%)	(2.52%)
Last 12 Months* (4/1/04 - 3/31/05)	4.45%	1.17%	6.76%	7.95%	14.96%

The G, F, C, S, and I Fund returns for the last 12 months assume unchanging balances (time-weighting) from month to month, and assume that earnings are compounded on a monthly basis.

The TSP is a retirement savings plan for civilian federal employees. The monthly G, F, C, S, and I Fund returns represent the actual total rates of return used to allocate monthly earnings to participant accounts. Allocations are usually completed by the fourth business day of the month. The returns are shown after deduction of accrued TSP administrative expenses. The F, C, S and I Fund returns also reflect the deduction of trading costs and accrued investment management fees.

The TSP performance history for the past 12 months can be found at
<http://www.tsp.gov/rates/monthly-current.html>.

TSP - The Importance to FERS Employees

The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is an important part of the total Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). TSP gives you a way to save extra money for the future and it allows you to get a tax break today.

FERS is a 3 tier retirement. The smallest part of the retirement is the FERS annuity; the middle part of the retirement is Social Security; and the largest part of the retirement is TSP.

Upon appointment as a FERS employee, the agency sets up a TSP account in your name. Every pay period the agency puts an amount equal to 1% of your basic pay in this account. This money is called your Agency Automatic (1%) contribution.

As a FERS employee, you may contribute up to 14% of your basic pay per pay period to your TSP account. If you elect to contribute to your TSP account, you will receive agency matching contributions, up to 5%. See the following chart for percentage of basic pay contributed to your TSP account. Obviously, allotting a higher contribution percentage will increase your TSP tier annuity.

Percent of Basic Pay Contributed to Your Account
(FERS Employees Only)

Your agency puts in:

You put in:	Automatic (1%) Contribution	Agency Matching Contribution	And the total contribution is:
0%	1%	0%	1%
1%	1%	1%	3%
2%	1%	2%	5%
3%	1%	3%	7%
4%	1%	3.5%	8.5%
5%	1%	4%	10%

Amounts that you contribute above 5% are not matched.

Your TSP contribution comes out of your basic pay before Federal and many State and local income taxes are figured. Therefore, you get a tax break for saving in the Thrift Savings Plan.

If you don't currently contribute to TSP, enroll during the next open season. If you currently contribute and elect to increase your contributions, you may do so at any time.

**THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN
IT JUST MAKES SENSE**

**Taxes are
due APRIL 15!**

What's Your Service Mentality IQ?

By Nancy Friedman,
Telephone Doctor

Most of us in the customer service arena are very good. And the reason is simple...we always carry a certain amount of a service mentality with us to do the job well.

People often ask me: "Nancy, what is the KEY to good customer service?" My answer is simple. There is no one key. There are many keys...and they all need to be on your customer service key ring.

So, come along with us and learn the 7 service mentalities that will raise the bar for you and your company. See how many of these attributes you own.

Empathy - Some call it sympathy. Whichever you call it, it needs to be there. When someone has a problem, we need to empathize with them and show we understand the frustration they're going through. What we don't want to do, however, is tell a customer, "I know exactly how you feel." Because you aren't able to know exactly how anyone else feels. But you can empathize, and that's why empathy is KEY for a service mentality.

Here's a better way to explain it. I had my wallet stolen a while back, at Disneyland no less. Everything was in it...and the money was the least of my problems. Credit cards, check book, social security card, drivers license...all of it GONE.

Over the years, I have learned to be a "good" customer, so I called the first credit card company and told them of my plight. I said, "Hi, my name is Nancy Friedman and I'm at Disney and my wallet was stolen. Everything's gone." And I told her what was in the wallet. She said without skipping a beat, "NAME?" I said, "It's still Nancy Friedman."

Where was her empathy, her sympathy? It wasn't there! All I needed to hear was a simple, "Gee, that's got to be so frustrating. Let me get the ball rolling to help you."

Enthusiasm - We need enthusiasm whenever we help a customer. They need to know you are truly

excited to help. (Of course, we need to do this without going over the top and giggling our way through the conversation.) Enthusiastic customer service people get the job done faster, simpler, and with a touch of class. How much enthusiasm do you show in your job?

Responsibility - This is one of the most important keys to a great service mentality. Be responsible for your job, your position and the company. Being responsible means it is your job.

If you have answered the call on behalf of your company, you have indeed accepted 100% responsibility for the call. "I wasn't here," "I don't know anything about that," "It's not my department," or all those other lines are not in the responsibility key of customer service.

Take responsibility for the call. You answered it. It's yours! This is important in a face-to-face situations as well. It's the old "don't point...go show."

Resiliency - This key is a little trickier to use. To be resilient, we need to have a mentality to bounce back from unfortunate events, setbacks or other negative incidents. It's really an attitude adjustment.

One situation with a customer may be more difficult than the other...and when you get to the next customer...your resiliency needs to kick in and bounce you right back to where it was before that negative event. Be resilient!

Ownership - A cousin of responsibility. So many times we hear and see people in the customer service arena who don't want to take ownership of the problem. When you own the problem, you'll handle it far better than if you don't want anything to do with it.

And don't forget...never take those barbs from the customer personally. They're not attacking YOU. They're attacking the problem. You're just the lightning rod, not the target. So own the customer you're working with - on the phone or in person!!! Take Ownership! Be proud!

Balance - This is the fine line between 'the customer is always right' and knowing what to do about the problem. At Telephone Doctor, we don't believe the customer necessarily is always right. We do, however, know customers always think they're right. And that is the perception we need to deal with at the time.

Many times the customer is in error...had the wrong date, the wrong receipt, the wrong information or

whatever. And yet, they're hell bent on proving that they are right. So you see, they think they're right. We often times know they are not. And that's the secret key...not letting on that we know they're wrong.

It's the balance in the key ring of success. Balance is the art of creating a 'win-win' situation. Once you have the key of balance, you'll be able to handle situations to make everyone happy.

Adaptability - Most of us learn at a very early age that everything doesn't happen the way we want it to all the time. So often we need to adapt to a certain situation. Learning how to adapt to all these situations can make you a top customer service individual. It's related to your attitude. Why do some folks adapt very easily and some are not able to adapt at all? It's mainly because of attitude. It shapes how they handle a situation and react to it.

How'd you do? If you have some of these 'secret' ingredients of customer service, you're well on your way to success. And even if you're missing one or two, here's your opportunity to learn more about them.

Good luck to you! And may your service mentality be with you today and always.

© Telephone Doctor, Inc. Telephone Doctor® is a twenty-year old training company which has helped over 20,000 organizations improve the way they communicate with customers. For information on America's favorite series of classroom training tools or on-site workshops, please visit www.telephonedoctor.com.

“The Cancer-Preventing Lifestyle”

HEALTH PROMOTION PROGRAM *Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital*

Many people worry about cancer-causing agents in the environment. But the biggest risk factors for cancer involve your lifestyle choices. Rate yourself on these seven cancer-prevention choices. Give yourself a rating from 1 to 5, with 1 representing “never” and 5 for “always.”

1. ___ I avoid smoking or using any tobacco products and I stay away from other people's smoke.

2. ___I get most of the calories in my diet from whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables (especially broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and brussel sprouts).

3. ___I take steps to restrict my consumption of fats, sugars and meat—no more than 30 percent of my daily calories are from fat and I eat no more than 6 ounces of lean meat, skinless poultry or fish a day.

4. ___I limit my alcohol intake to one drink a day or less.

5. ___I get 30 minutes of brisk exercise three or more times a week.

6. ___I protect my skin by staying out of the sun. When I do go out in the sun, I use a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15.

7. ___I wear protective equipment when working with hazardous chemicals and I use such chemicals only according to directions.

Add up your total score. A score of 28 to 35 means you already have the lifestyle to help ward off cancer. A score of 17 to 27 means you have some good cancer-prevention habits, but you could do more. If your score falls between 7 and 16, you can make many improvements in your lifestyle to reduce your chances of getting cancer. Why not choose to make one of these beneficial changes right now?

One change I will make:

Lifestyle changes have been proven to minimize the risk of cancer. But life offers no absolute guarantees. Boost your odds against cancer even further by learning to recognize cancer as early as possible.

- Know the seven warning signs of cancer:
- Be alert for any cancers that are common in your family. Tell your doctor about them.
- Follow a regular schedule of physical exams and screenings as recommended by your doctor.
- If you're a woman, examine your breasts for lumps or changes at least once a month. If you're a man, examine your testicles once a month after a warm shower or bath.

- Examine your body, including the inside of your mouth, for any visible changes and report them to your doctor.

The Seven Warning Signs of Cancer

1. A change in bowel or bladder habits.
2. A sore that doesn't heal.
3. Unusual bleeding or discharge.
4. A thickening or lump in your breast or elsewhere.
5. Difficulty in swallowing, or chronic indigestion.
6. An obvious change in a wart or mole.
7. A nagging cough or persistent hoarseness.

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In recognition of National Cancer Awareness Month, the Health Promotion Program at Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital will be providing Health Awareness information at the Main Post Exchange on 22 April 2005 from 10 AM to 1 PM. For more information on Cancer Prevention contact the Health Promotion Program at 531-6880.

ARTICLES FOR BULLETIN

If you have any suggestions on topics or issues that you would like addressed in future bulletins, please submit them to one of the following:

1. ogles@polk.army.mil
2. Call 531-4020

Suggestions will be reviewed and addressed if at all possible.

//Original Signed//

DONALD R. MALLETT
Director, Civilian Personnel
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